

Week Ending Friday, August 31, 2007

The President's Radio Address

August 25, 2007

Good morning. This week, I traveled to Kansas City to address the annual convention of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. I spoke about the ideological struggle that our Nation faces in the 21st century and the lessons we can draw from the advance of freedom in Asia in the 20th century. America's enduring presence and perseverance on that continent aided the rise of democracy, helped transform American enemies into American allies, and made our country safer.

Next week, I will address the members of the American Legion at their annual convention in Reno. In that speech, I will focus on the Middle East and why the rise of a free and democratic Iraq is critical to the future of this vital region and to our Nation's security.

I will also provide an update on the developments we are seeing from our new strategy in Iraq. Every month since January, U.S. forces have killed or captured an average of more than 1,500 Al Qaida terrorists and other extremists. And in June, our troops launched a surge of operations that is helping bring former Sunni insurgents into the fight against Al Qaida, clear the terrorists out of population centers, and give families in liberated Iraqi cities a safer and more normal life.

As security improves, more Iraqis are stepping forward to defend their democracy. Young Iraqi men are signing up for the army. Iraqi police are now patrolling the streets. Coalition and Iraqi forces have doubled the number of joint operations. As the Iraqi people feel more secure, they are also forming neighborhood watch groups. They're volunteering important information about the terrorists and extremists hiding in their midst. And the increase in tips helps account for the marked reduction in sectarian murders.

By driving out the terrorists from cities and neighborhoods, we're creating the conditions

for reconciliation, especially at the local level. In communities across Iraq, citizens are seeing their local and Provincial governments return to operation. Despite continuing violence, leaders in places like Anbar, Najaf, and Ninawa are now working through local Provincial councils to approve funds to finance the rebuilding of homes and neighborhoods, to fight corruption, and to create new jobs.

Here at home, it can be easy to overlook the bravery shown by Iraqi troops and Iraqi civilians who are in the fight for freedom. But our troops on the ground see it every day. Last week, a team of American soldiers was meeting with an Iraqi citizens group near Baghdad. Suddenly, a suicide bomber came running around a corner and headed straight for our soldiers and the Iraqi civilians.

One Iraqi man saw what was happening and ran to intercept the bomber. As he pushed the terrorist away, the bomb detonated, killing both men, but sparing four American soldiers and eight Iraqi civilians. Army Staff Sergeant Sean Kane is one of those who says he owes his life to this brave Iraqi. Sergeant Kane says, "He could have run behind us or away from us, but he made the decision to sacrifice himself to protect everyone." Sergeant Kane spoke to the Iraqi man's father, who said that even if his son had known the outcome beforehand, he "[would not] have acted differently."

The story does not end there. Later that same night, the citizens group contacted the local director of the National Police and told him the location of the Al Qaida cell believed to be responsible for the attack. The National Police immediately conducted a raid that resulted in four arrests.

We are still in the early stages of our new operations. But the success of the past couple of months have shown that conditions on the ground can change—and they are changing. We cannot expect the new strategy we are carrying out to bring success overnight. But by standing with the Iraqi people as they

build their democracy, we will deliver a devastating blow to Al Qaida, we will help provide new hope for millions of people throughout the Middle East, we will gain a friend and ally in the war on terror, and we will make the American people safer.

Thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 8:20 a.m. on August 24 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on August 25. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on August 24 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks on the Resignation of Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales in Waco, Texas

August 27, 2007

This morning Attorney General Alberto Gonzales announced that he will leave the Department of Justice after 2½ years of service to the Department. Al Gonzales is a man of integrity, decency, and principle. And I have reluctantly accepted his resignation, with great appreciation for the service that he has provided for our country.

As Attorney General and before that as White House Counsel, Al Gonzales has played a critical role in shaping our policies in the war on terror and has worked tirelessly to make this country safer. The PATRIOT Act, the Military Commissions Act, and other important laws bear his imprint. Under his leadership, the Justice Department has made a priority of protecting children from Internet predators and made enforcement of civil rights laws a top priority. He aggressively and successfully pursued public corruption and effectively combated gang violence.

As Attorney General, he played an important role in helping to confirm two fine jurists in Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito. He did an outstanding job as White House Counsel, identifying and recommending the best nominees to fill critically important Federal court vacancies.

Alberto Gonzales's tenure as Attorney General and White House Counsel is only part of a long history of distinguished public

service that began as a young man when, after high school, he enlisted in the United States Air Force. When I became Governor of Texas in 1995, I recruited him from one of Texas's most prestigious law firms to be my general counsel. He went on to become Texas's 100th secretary of state and to serve on our State's supreme court. In the long course of our work together, this trusted adviser became a close friend.

These various positions have required sacrifice from Al, his wife, Becky, their sons, Jared, Graham, and Gabriel. And I thank them for their service to the country.

After months of unfair treatment that has created a harmful distraction at the Justice Department, Judge Gonzales decided to resign his position, and I accept his decision. It's sad that we live in a time when a talented and honorable person like Alberto Gonzales is impeded from doing important work because his good name was dragged through the mud for political reasons.

I've asked Solicitor General Paul Clement to serve as Acting Attorney General upon Alberto Gonzales's departure and until a nominee has been confirmed by the Senate. He's agreed to do so. Paul is one of the finest lawyers in America. As Solicitor General, Paul has developed a reputation for excellence and fairness and earned the respect and confidence of the entire Justice Department.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:50 a.m. at the Texas State Technical College Airport. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Congratulating Iraqi Leaders at Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico

August 27, 2007

I congratulate Iraq's leaders on the agreement reached yesterday in Baghdad. I've been briefed on the agreement, and this